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ABSTRACT

The project selected 16 educators representing liberal arts faculty, education faculty, and public school teachers to train them about Africa. The training had three phases: (1) an on-campus program on African history, politics, economics, and geography, focusing on Nigeria; (2) six weeks in Nigeria, meeting with prominent educators, politicians, cultural leaders, and average citizens, attending seminars and workshops at six Nigerian universities, and visiting cultural and economic centers for first-hand experience with various cultural groups; and (3) development of curriculum units and modules on Africa in general, using Nigeria as a case study, emphasizing the interdependence of industrialized and third-world nations. The modules and units of study developed were later incorporated into area studies courses in the public schools, formed the multicultural component of the teacher education program, and were integrated into selected required undergraduate liberal arts courses. Participants held seminars at the university to share their experience, knowledge, and perspectives on Africa. Institutionalization of the new curriculum components within the existing curriculum has helped to maximize dissemination of information about Nigeria, and the three educator groups form a support system for further education about Africa. (Author/MSE)

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THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATORS

INTER-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATORS INTER-CULTURAL EXPERIENCE
IN NIGERIA

ABSTRACT

The goals of the project were to select 15 educators representing faculty from Liberal Arts, Education and public school teachers K-12, and to train them about Africa. The training consisted of three phases: the first was held on the IUP campus and provided them with information on African history, politics, economics, and geography, emphasizing Nigeria as a case study model. The second phase exposed them to six weeks of intensive involvement in Nigeria where they met with prominent educators, politicians, cultural leaders and average citizens. The study travel consisted of seminars and workshops conducted by qualified educators at six Nigerian universities. The formal instruction in Nigeria was supplemented by visitation to various cultural and economic centers where the Western Pennsylvania educators had an opportunity to gain first-hand experience with the different cultural groups.

The experience in the first two phases was channeled and directed toward developing curriculum units and modules on Africa in general, using Nigeria as a case study, creating within the participants an increased sense of the need to do a more accurate and comprehensive job of educating Western Pennsylvanians about Africa and the growing interdependence between industrialized and third world nations.

When the participants returned from Nigeria, they worked separately and in consort to develop modules and units of study that were incorporated into the area studies courses in the public school; the multi-cultural and inter-cultural component of the teacher education program and; selected Liberal Arts courses in the required undergraduate general education component. The participants held seminars at IUP to share their experience, knowledge and perspective on Africa.

The institutionalizing of the new components on Africa into their existing curriculum helped to maximize the dissemination of information about Nigeria. The three constituencies that impact on the preparation of teachers serve as a support system for insuring that Africa becomes a more taught-about area. Participants were selected to represent teachers who had an opportunity and means to impact the curriculum in their institutions and district.

INTRODUCTION

The Inter-Cultural Program Report will provide information on the purpose, goals and objectives of the project, the plan of the study program will be explained, and concclusions and recommendations provided.

PURPOSE

The College of Education in conjunction with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and selected public school districts proposed a training program on Africa. Participants consisted of sixteen (16) selected educators from western Pennsylvania. Ten (10) members were selected from the public school system at both the elementary and secondary level and six (6) came from colleges and universities. The group projects program proposal was divided into three phases. The first phase was a six week pre-orientation program on the IUP campus followed by an experience in Nigeria of intensive workshops and travel with the terminal goal, the development of authentic and relevant instructional materials on the African continent using Nigeria as a case study. The curriculum materials were used to improve teaching in three separate arenas:

1. public school social studies courses, K-12;
2. selected liberal arts courses in the required general education component of the unviersity undergraduate program; and
3. the multi-cultural and cross-cultural component of the teacher education program.

Although IUP is one of the largest institutions in the state and arracts students both nationally and internationally, the population is very homogenous both at the university level and in the surrounding public school districts. Minorities, particularly Blacks or Africans, represent a small portion of the population. The changing demographics within the U.S. and an increased awareness of the growing interdependence on and involvement between the U.S. and African countries, heightened the need to make our citizens more aware and knowledgeable about those relationships. A poll of western Pennsylvania educators designed to determine the level of competence teachers in western Pennsylvania had in international education showed that over 93% of the respondents believed they did not have high competence in teaching about international education. In addition, the data showed that less than 10% felt they had exposure to international education while over 95% expressed a strong desire to see it introduced in their schools. The cultural area most people wanted to know about was Africa, with 35% of the respondents selecting that area.

GOALS

Knowledge of the African continent and its people has been typically promoted only where interested scholars and universities have developed outreach programs for African studies or where large groups of African students and scholars reside. The gravity of the damage done to the cultural image of Africa is that many of the distortions and stereotypes pervade and in the teaching of history in the schools, the continent is often simply ignored. It was clear that to counteract the stereotypes and misinformation an organized effort to address the shortcomings at both the university and public school level was needed. The only long-term solution to the issue of better global understanding is to institutionalize change to insure that educators will systematically address the issue and pass on the new knowledge base and perspective to the new generation of students and teachers.

Most of the teachers have had training which emphasizes their ties to Europe and western civilization, and had little or no training in African studies or other third-world countries. Without sufficient information they cannot teach about or correct the erroneous and stereotypic information about Africa and its people. Consequently, social and cultural ignorance and ethnocentricity continue to pervade the school system, creating imbalance in the curriculum.

Schools in Western Pennsylvania have been grossly deprived of international exposure. Some youth from Western Pennsylvania will seek jobs outside their cultural environment. If they have not been exposed to other cultures, it will be difficult for them to cope with the differences and to function effectively.

Teachers who have a different preparation can: serve as catalysts in imparting accurate information about Africa; developing teaching modules and materials including study units; and, eventually build outreach programs for African studies at appropriate grade levels using Nigeria as a case study. It was our belief that the three constituencies (Liberal Arts faculty, Teacher Education faculty, and Public School teachers) could be a major force for bringing about curriculuar revision and improving the teaching about Africa and other crucial area studies. The three constituencies cover the spectrum from preparation and training to application in the public schools. In addition, those 16 educators could provide a strong support system for each other as they begin to impact their institutions by incorporating into their programs new curriculum materials, fresh ideas and a desire to do a quality job.

OBJECTIVES

The three constituencies will develop more comprehensive and realistic curriculum dealing with the contributions of sub-Sahara Africans to the world community. The units will emphasize the increased interdependency between industrialized nations and developing nations.

Curriculum units on Nigeria will be developed as a model for the study of the rest of Africa and be incorporated into courses within the following three areas:

A. The state-mandated planned courses of study on area studies and world cultures at the third, fifth and tenth grade levels where the objectives are to broaden ones understanding of and appreciation for other cultures.
B. The multi-cultural and cross-cultural component of the Teacher Education program including experience in developing units and teaching strategies on Africa.
C. Selected Liberal Arts courses in the required General Education sequence including units with more comprehensive and accurate information about Africa.

The following are outline objectives of the program:

1. To provide opportunities for the participants to acquire first-hand knowledge of the history, geography, culture, economics and politics of Nigeria and dispel stereotypes and myths they had learned previously.
2. To develop cognitive and affective changes in the participants and to have these reflected in their social study courses and courses offered to teacher education students.
3. To train the participants to serve as leaders and catalysts for the development of understanding of African cultures and an awareness of their own cultural values.

4. To develop units of study in history, geography, culture, economics and politics of Nigeria that include a full range of instructional materials, supplemental information and strategies for teaching.
5. To use the curriculum in the participating school district as a model for other districts within the larger intermediate unit.

PLAN OF STUDY PROGRAM

To prepare the participants for their experience in Nigeria it was necessary to provide them with detailed information about the country, the goals and objectives of the project and to begin to develop a sense of group identity.

Orientation Program

The purposes of the orientation program were:

1. to bring the participants together and get them to know the objectives of the group project.
2. to familiarize the participants with the history, geography, culture, educational system and politics in general and most especially, Nigeria.

The orientation took place at IUP because of its central location, its impact as the second largest teacher education program in the Commonwealth, and because of the availability of material resources needed for the program preparation. The orientation program lasted for six weeks and was divided into three phases.

The main theme of the first phase was a general survey of Africa and its traditional cultures, individual and group research on the cultural diversity of Africa in relationship to the growing problem of cultural diversity. Educational systems were also emphasized. There was a workshop to show how to develop course units for the group project abroad. Experts in group projects in Africa as well as African scholars in the U.S. were invited to a workshop to familiarize the participants with the climate, food, culture, economy and other information necessary to prepare the participants for the inter-cultural experiences in Africa.

The second phase consisted of lectures, workshops, field studies and trips to cultural and historical sites, including experiences in other cultural activities in the host coutnry. Participants received lectures, and attend seminar and workshops at the host universities, museums and other government departments for arts and culture. There was a site coordinator in each of the participating host universities.

Units on Nigeria were developed from lectures, instructional materials and supplementary readings from books, documents and journals. Resource materials such as artifacts, educational films, museum reproductions, recordings and other available and relevant curriculum materials collected during the field trips or developed at the workshops were organized in terms of their relativity and appropriateness to each of the unit areas.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project is on-going, supported by institutional funding and will officially conclude during the spring semester, 1990. A Regional Conference will be held where participants will share their experiences and make available their completed units to interested educators.

Since the group's return from Nigeria, there have been several planning and sharing sessions on the IUP campus. Those sessions focused on an examination of the artifacts, slides, videos, lectures, books and other instructional materials that were brought back by the group. The groups explored ways the materials could most effectively be used in each school setting. Participants used those meetings to bounce ideas off one another and decide where they would try to include those materials in their units.

The fall semester of 1988 was a time to flush out a unit that could be piloted. During the spring semester participants piloted the instructional units in the existing classes. During the fall semester 1989 participants will revise their lessons and units so that a final product will be available during the spring of 1990. Meetings among the participants are scheduled at IUP during the fall semester to finalize plans for the conference and to determine the best means for disseminating the materials.

Based on earlier reports from the participants and an examination of materials prepared for the incorporation into the various courses, the inter-cultural experience has been very successful. Public schools teachers have been able to impact their own courses and raise the consciousness of students and teachers in their schools. In the Pittsburgh District, the secondary social studies teachers reviewed the units prepared by one of the participants and have agreed to incorporate components of it into the district-wide course requirements. University participants in the five colleges have been able to use the source material gathered on-site to supplement the limited number of books and articles on Nigeria which are available in this country.

The decision of the project directors to select participants from a small geographic region has proven to be a sound one in that the close proximity (40 mile radius from IUP) from the members to each other has allowed them to keep in touch and thus provide a strong support system for each other. Numerous presentations have been made by the members to schools, service organizations and other groups. This activity has helped to impact the immediate region. One university has initiated a yearly conference focusing on West Africa. Another university has identified West Africans in the region and regularly involves them in courses and other activities at the university.

A catalog of activities and materials is being compiled and will be available at the conference where a wider dissemination of information can occur. It must be noted that the success of the project was a direct result of the tremendous support provided by the members of the National University Commission in Nigeria and the faculty and staff who delivered the program at each of the Nigerian universities we visited. The quality of the academic component in Nigeria was extremely high; the on-site coordinators were able to secure access to cultural activities, home visits, and meetings with traditional leaders that provided a depth of experience most foreigners would never have access to.

I believe the program is replicable by other institutions and would strongly support their efforts. A key to their success is the continued support of the National University Commission in any endeavor.